

Message Text

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FM AMEMBASSY ATHENS

TO SECSTATE WASHDC IMMEDIATE 8454

C O N F I D E N T I A L ATHENS 3078

LIMDIS

E.O. 11652: GDS

TAGS: PFOR GR US

SUBJECT: REMARKS CONCERNING GREECE ATTRIBUTED TO VICE
PRESIDENT ROCKEFELLER

REF: ATHENS 3024 AND PREVIOUS

1. DURING THE COURSE OF A CONVERSATION I HAD THIS AFTER-
NOON WITH FOREIGN MINISTER BITSIOS (BEING REPORTED
SEPTELS), BITSIOS AT ONE POINT REFERRED TO THE HEAVY
PUBLIC PLAY THAT HAS BEEN GIVEN IN THE GREEK PRESS THE PAST
FEW DAYS TO REMARKS ATTRIBUTED TO VICE PRESIDENT ROCKEFELLER
BY THE WASHINGTON POST CONCERNING GREECE. BITSIOS SAID
THAT HE RECOGNIZED THAT HIS SUBJECT HAD ALREADY BEEN TAKEN
UP WITH US OFFICIALLY IN ATHENS (REFTEL) AND SAID HE WAS
AWAITING A REPORT FROM THE GREEK AMBASSADOR IN WASHINGTON
IN WHICH THE AMBASSADOR WAS INSTRUCTED TO MAKE A "PROTEST"
TO UNDER SECRETARY SISCO.

2. I EXPRESSED SURPRISE AT BITSIOS' REFERRING TO A
"PROTEST" ON THIS MATTER, THE MORE SO SINCE ANY ACTION
TAKEN BY THE GREEK GOVERNMENT WOULD HAVE TO BE BASED
UPON UNVERIFIED PRESS REPORTS OF REMARKS ALLEGEDLY MADE
BY THE VICE PRESIDENT. BITSIOS CORRECTED HIMSELF AND
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SAID THAT THE GOG WOULD NOT BE "PROTESTING " TO UNDER

SECRETARY SISCO BUT RATHER WOULD BE MAKING IN WASHINGTON A PARALLEL "DEMARCHE" AND "REPRESENTATIONS" TO EXPRESS THE GOG'S "CONCERN" ABOUT THE UNFAVORABLE IMPACT THE VICE PRESIDENT'S PURPORTED REMARKS WERE HAVING ON THE EFFORTS BEING MADE BY AMERICAN AND GREEK OFFICIALS TO REPAIR AND IMPROVE US-GREEK BILATERAL RELATIONS.

3. I TOLD BITSIOS THAT I WAS ALSO CONCERNED ABOUT THE WAY THE VICE PRESIDENT'S ALLEGED REMARKS WERE CARRIED IN THE GREEK PRESS. I SAID THAT I KNEW THE VICE PRESIDENT PERSONALLY AND OVER THE YEARS HAD HAD THE OCCASION MORE THAN ONCE TO DISCUSS INTERNATIONAL AFFAIRS WITH HIM. I SAID IT WAS INCONCEIVABLE TO ME THAT THE VICE PRESIDENT HAD THE SLIGHTEST FEELING OF ILL WILL OR CONDESCENSION TOWARD GREECE AND THE GREEK PEOPLE AND THAT THE REMARKS ATTRIBUTED TO HIM -- IF INDEED THEY WERE EVER MADE AT ALL -- MUST HAVE BEEN TAKEN COMPLETELY OUT OF CONTEXT AND DISTORTED IN ORDER TO GIVE THEM AN ANTI-GREEK CHARACTER.

4. BITSIOS SAID THAT PRIME MINISTER CARAMANLIS WAS PARTICULARLY TAKEN ABACK WHEN HE FIRST LEARNED OF THE NEWS STORIES BECAUSE THE PRIME MINISTER ALSO KNEW VICE PRESIDENT ROCKEFELLER PERSONALLY, HAD ALWAYS THOUGHT MOST HIGHLY OF HIM, AND CONSIDERED HIM A PERSONAL FRIEND AS WELL AS A FRIEND OF GREECE. I SAID I HOPED THAT BITSIOS, WHO SAID HE WOULD BE SEEING CARAMANLIS LATER TONIGHT OR TOMORROW, WOULD CONVEY TO THE PRIME MINISTER MY OWN ASSESMENT OF THE MATTER AND REASSURE CARAMANLIS OF MY CONFIDENCE THAT THE VICE PRESIDENT HAD ONLY THE KINDEST AND FRIENDLIEST OF FEELINGS TOWARD GREECE.
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